

CELLOGRAFFITI

A COLLABORATIVE TEMPORARY CELLOPHANE INSTALLATION



Working collaboratively encourages children to help each other.

Sue Liedke

My students always love a chance to mix familiar techniques and unexpected materials. They got that chance when we spent a week creating a cellograffiti fort in our pre-K art studio. Cellograffiti, or cellograff, is art painted on clear plastic cellophane stretched between poles, trees, or other structures. The tightly wrapped layers of cellophane, pulled snug between two trees, creates a wall where no walls exist. These clear panels provide a temporary surface for spray paint creations. With inexpensive materials, graffiti artists are able

to create unexpected work in forests, parks, and other public spaces all over the world. Evgeny Ches is one artist who works in cellograffiti—find some examples of his artwork to share with your students.

Prior Work with Transparency

In my experience, students enjoy the opportunity to draw and paint on clear surfaces. We have previously experimented with plexiglass, overhead transparencies, and takeout containers, and I've known a number of art teachers and parents who have implemented these materials in



Students Skylar, Isabella, and Lucia work happily together.

OBJECTIVE

Collaboratively explore the properties of transparency and translucency through painting.

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

How can light be used in art?

MATERIALS AND RESOURCES

- High-grade plastic wrap
- Tempera paint and paintbrushes
- Large sheets of vellum
- Magnet tiles

NATIONAL VISUAL ARTS STANDARDS

Create: Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.

Create: Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.

NAEYC EARLY LEARNING PROGRAM ACCREDITATION STANDARD

Supports or aligns to Social and Emotional Development 2B.4.

their projects. Some Instagrammers I follow use plastic wrap to create small walls for kids to paint on, so I wondered how my students would respond to a bigger, immersive transparent experience.

Introduction to Students

I prepped our space by flipping one of our 48 x 48" work tables upside

down. Using the upright legs as pillars, I wrapped plastic wrap around three sides of the table, creating a fort with short "walls" ready for paint. As my pre-K students entered the studio, they were immediately intrigued by the upturned table. We watched a short time-lapse video of a graffiti artist painting a lion on a cellophane wall, and then students felt and held

small pieces of plastic wrap. They described the texture (smooth, soft) and properties (see-through, stretchy) specific to this material.

Trial, Error, and Engineering

After our discussion, I opened up our choice-based studio for work time. Five to six students at a time worked together on decorating the fort's walls, using paint and paintbrushes. Through some amount of trial and error, we found that using high-grade plastic wrap and BioColor paint mixed with tempera were the best materials for this project. You may want to try other brands of tempera to see if they will adhere to the plastic wrap.

While some students painted the walls of the fort, others explored different aspects of transparency and translucency. At our engineering station, students used magnet tiles set up on our overhead projector, sending colorful large-scale shapes onto the ceiling. Others worked at a collaborative drawing station with giant layered vellum paper. Throughout the week, each student had a chance to visit all of the stations.

Continuing Collaboration

At the cellophane fort, each class built on the previous class's work, the youngest students painting large swathes of color and advanced students adding finer detail work. Students worked from both inside and outside our see-through structure, visibly excited to see their collaborators through their work.

After our first day, I attached dowels to each leg of the table, extending the walls by several feet, and added more cellophane each day. The walls became higher (eventually necessitating the careful use of stools and a step ladder), a doorway emerged, and, with some strategically placed supports, a roof slowly took form. By using stronger pro-grade plastic wrap (usually reserved for furniture packing or restaurant use), the walls were strong enough to cut windows and peepholes through, which further encouraged interaction between inside and outside painters.



The fort takes shape as Paul, Olivia, Ricellia, and others contribute to it.



Engaging activities foster intense focus.

Evolution

In total, we spent five days constructing and decorating our fort. The form slowly evolved each day until it transformed into an exciting, colorful structure that had multilayered walls, windows, peepholes, and a strange sloping roof.

Students were able to create and take ownership of a physical 3D structure. They explored concepts of transparency, architecture, and collaboration. Best of all, the fort ended up hosting hours of good times, and students were able to share their space with their peers. This activity can certainly be adapted for other grade levels. 🌀

Sue Liedke is a teacher at the Settlement Music School in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and a museum educator at the Philadelphia Museum of Art.



Logan's joy in the process is evident.